



To: Town Council Standing Committee on Outreach, Communications, and Appointments (OCA)

From: Evan Ross, OCA Designee for Ranked-Choice Voting Commission

Date: 05-22-2019

RE: Recommended Appointments to the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission [Charter Sec. 10.10]

I request that OCA recommend the following individuals to the full Town Council for appointment to the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission:

1. Tanya Leise
2. Jesse Crafts-Finch
3. John Bryan

Recommended appointee profiles

Tanya Leise: Tanya is a professor at Amherst College in the Mathematics and Statistics Department where she teaches a course on the mathematics of voting in elections and served as an adviser to Amherst College in their use of ranked-choice voting to select a new mascot. Her priorities are making sure elections result in victors who are representative of the community, and she emphasized the importance of minority voices being heard. Tanya also acknowledged the difficulty of implementing ranked-choice voting when multiple candidates are elected, and is willing to dig in and do the background research required. Tanya is also on sabbatical next year, allowing for time to serve on the Commission.

Jesse Crafts-Finch: Jesse is a software developer who is connected with Voter Choice MA and who has served as an election volunteer. He emphasized that his experience with software and as a businessperson gives him experience working with teams of people and provides him an understanding of the need to clearly convey technical information to people, both of which would be useful on the Commission. Jesse also showed consideration of the technical aspects of ranked-choice voting implementation, including consideration of costs of purchasing new voting machines.

John Bryan: John is a recently retired professional writer and UMass Vice Provost for Academic Personnel. His interest in the commission stems from his disappointment over increasing political polarization and the effects of “spoiler candidates”. John identified many of the communication challenges involved with implementing ranked-choice voting, for which his background as a professional writer would be useful. John has also worked as an election worker, and offered comments on necessary election worker training, ballot design, and ballot counting considerations necessary for ranked-choice voting to be successful.

Applicant evaluation criteria

OCA did not provide any evaluation criteria or selection guidelines to assist the OCA Designee in selecting candidates. When selecting candidates, I considered the following:

- The Commission should consist of a range of experiences, expertise, and perspectives.
- The Commission should consist of members who have skills related to the various aspects and stages of implementing ranked-choice voting (i.e. selecting the best model, identifying necessary equipment, educating voters etc.).
- Appointees should demonstrate an ability to successfully collaborate with other members of a multiple-member body.
- Preference for candidates who demonstrated existing knowledge of ranked-choice voting, and that different models of ranked-choice voting exist.
- Preference for candidates who acknowledged the challenges inherent in the Commission's task or acknowledged the critiques of ranked-choice voting.

Overview of the process to recommend appointees to the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission

Applications

The Town Council established the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission on 12-10-2019, after which residents could apply to become members. Applicants to multiple-member bodies submit an online Community Activity Form (CAF), previously known as Citizen Activity Form. On 02-20-2019, OCA solicited applications via the Town website under "News & Announcements" and via Newsflash to subscribers (see supplemental information). The Town received CAFs for the Commission from 12-31-2018 through 05-12-2019. The Town Manager's office established that all applicants are current residents under Charter Sec. 3.3 and forwarded CAFs to the OCA Designee (see process in supplemental information) on 05-13-2019.

In continuation of past practice, and as recently confirmed by the Town Attorney, any current submitted CAF is a personnel document not subject to public records disclosure. Therefore, Councilors cannot deliberate on or bring into consideration any submitted CAF in an open session. Executive session could only be invoked in a very narrow set of circumstances, and OCA chose not to pursue that path after extensive discussion by speaker phone with the Town Attorney during an open session. In continuation of past practice and with an emphasis on

protecting the privacy concerns of applicants, OCA does not release names of applicants and numbers of applicants.

Interviews

To comply with Open Meeting Law, OCA voted 04-29-2019 to designate Evan Ross as the OCA Designee to conduct all the interviews for the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission.

The Town Manager's office offered every resident applicant an interview. All but one applicant was available for an in-person interview, and that applicant participated in a phone interview. Interviews occurred on 05-15-2019 and 05-17-2019 and included the OCA Designee, the Town Manager, and the Town Clerk to reflect the joint appointing authority of the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission (Charter Sec. 10.10). One candidate withdrew from consideration during the interview. The OCA Designee exclusively used the standard set of interview questions (see attached) OCA adopted on 04-08-2019. Interviewers used the standard interview questions as a guide, but the Town Manager and Town Clerk asked additional questions at their discretion.

Evaluation

Following interviews, the OCA Designee, Town Manager, and Town Clerk discussed all interviewed applicants and came to consensus around six candidates. The Town Manager and OCA Designee then discussed which three candidates would be appointees of the Town Manager and which three candidates would be appointees of the Town Council (see Charter Sec. 10.10). The OCA Designee emailed all recommended appointees for appointment by the Town Council the following:

Dear _____:

As the interview designee for the Town Council Outreach, Communications, and Appointments Committee (OCA), tasked with bringing forth recommended appointees to the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission for appointment by the Town Council, I am writing to you today to let you know that I will be bringing your name forward to OCA as a recommended appointee to the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission. **Please confirm that you are willing to accept this appointment.**

The process for appointment will be as follows. On Friday, May 17th, 2019, I will be publicly posting a report that will include my recommended appointees to the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission, including names, evaluation criteria, and a description of the



process. **Please confirm that you are willing to have your name publicly published as a recommended appointee.**

On Wednesday, May 22nd, 2019, at 8:30 AM in The Town Room in Town Hall the Outreach, Communications, and Appointments Committee will meet to discuss my recommended appointees and potentially vote on whether to recommend them to the Town Council for appointment. Note that **this email does not guarantee appointment.** Successful appointment requires the affirmative votes of the Outreach, Communications, and Appointments Committee and the Town Council.

Thank you again for your interest in serving your town.

Best,
Evan Ross

Demographics

Demographic information on the applicant pool is in the supplemental information. The applicant pool was relatively small and did not match the diversity of our community. This was especially true for racial diversity.

Legal References

Charter Sec. 2.9: CREATION OF RANKED-CHOICE VOTING COMMISSION

Within 6 months of the assumption of office by the Town Council, the Town Council shall create a Ranked-Choice Voting Commission for the purpose of proposing a measure to adopt and implement ranked-choice voting in Amherst. The Commission shall consist of 7 members: 1 shall be the Town Clerk or designee, 3 shall be residents appointed by the Town Council, and 3 shall be residents appointed by the Town Manager. The commission shall propose a measure to the Town Council by September 1, 2020. The Town Council shall adopt the proposed measure with or without amendments within 90 days of receipt. A voting method shall be considered ranked-choice voting if the voter ranks candidates in order of preference and a voter's lower ranked choice does not impact the likelihood of a higher ranked choice being elected.

Charter Sec. 9.12(e)

SECTION 9.12: UNIFORM PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO MULTIPLE-MEMBER BODIES

(e) Vacancies: Whenever a vacancy occurs, or is about to occur, on a multiple-member body, the appointing authority shall immediately cause public notice of the vacancy, or impending vacancy, to be published on the Town bulletin board for a period of not less than 14 days. Any person who desires to be considered for appointment to the multiple-member body shall file with the appointing authority a statement in clear and specific terms setting forth the person's interest and experience.

Supplemental Information (separate document)

- Demographic data of applicants to Ranked-Choice Voting Commission
- Decision Tree for Town Council to Appoint Residents Recommended by the Outreach, Communications, and Appointments [OCA] Committee for Appointment to Multiple-Member Bodies Appointed by the Town Council
- Process to recommend appointees to multiple-member bodies appointed by the Town Council and the Town Manager (Ranked-Choice Voting Commission & Participatory Budgeting Commission).
- Vacancy Notices: Town bulletin board (website) and Newsflash to subscribers
- Standard Interview questions adopted by OCA 04-08-2019
- Interview Protocol drafted through 04-08-2019 edited for Ranked-Choice Voting and Participatory Budgeting Commissions